

NSC DRAFT BRIEFING

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WEST GERMAN ELECTIONS

On the basis of the official final election returns Chancellor Adenauer received an unexpected 45.2 percent of the popular vote, a gain of 14 percent over his 1949 Bundestag vote. His Christian Democratic party will command almost exactly half of the 487 seats in the new Bundestag. In alliance with the former coalition parties and the Refugee Party, which supports his integration policies, he will command slightly better than two-thirds. This strength will make possible an amendment to the basic law, thus permitting West German rearmament, should the Constitutional Court object to the Bonn and Paris treaties.

Adenauer's success results in the first instance from his personal prestige and his achievement in restoring Germany to a respected position. Important contributing factors are

the high level of German prosperity, a general dislike of all forms of radicalism, his defiance of the USSR, and at least some popular approval of his policy of allying the Federal Republic closely with Western Europe and the United States.

With four years of unchallenged legislative power facing him, Adenauer will be able to adopt exceedingly flexible policies to suit his needs. American officials in Bonn may, however, find him harder to deal with now since the election returns represent a personal mandate and may encourage him to become even more independent of foreign advice.

The Chancellor is emotionally attached to European unity and will almost certainly support the EDC in the immediate months ahead. If, however, the French government has not acted affirmatively on the Bonn and Paris treaties by next spring, Adenauer may then push for another solution on re-armament which would give West Germany greater independence

and allow him to play the role of the leading statesman of the continent.

The election cannot be interpreted simply as a referendum on EDC. It is clear, nevertheless, that fresh impetus has been given the general concept of European integration. The West German Constitutional Court, which is now considering the constitutionality of the Bonn and Paris treaties, can be expected to interpret the overwhelming Christian Democratic plurality as national approval of the treaties, and hence be loathe to overturn this referendum by an unfavorable decision. Even if the court should reject the treaties, the new Bonn government could almost certainly muster the two-thirds parliamentary vote necessary to amend the constitution.

The Social Democratic Party's share of the vote was less than one percent below its 1949 mark of 29 percent but fell far short of its expectations. Extensive changes in the party may now occur, possibly including replacement of Erich Ollenhauer, the present party chairman, by one of the moderate

leaders not associated with all-out opposition to Adenauer's Western integration program. In any event, the party will probably now focus its political efforts on domestic issues, rather than on foreign policy.

A notable feature of the election was the collapse of all extremist parties, none of which will be represented in the Bundestag.